



皇帝湯

**SOUL FOOD  
FOR 85**







# I COME TO MY FAMILY'S SOUL

*(After a translation of  
Xavier Valcarcel's "Doppelgänger" poem  
by Roque Raquel Solas Rivera)*

I come to my family's soul.  
I come through her double doors.  
She beckons me.  
She pulls me in to walk past  
Formica counters and tables.  
She put napkins in my pocket.  
She feeds me a teaspoon of sugar.  
She tells me to smell the coffee, freshly made.  
She guides me to the back booth.

I come to Great China,  
*Ai Joong Wah*, heart  
of my family's soul.  
I hear oil spit and sputter,  
stir frying ginger and garlic  
in the giant wok.  
I taste pencil-thin refrigerated strands of floured-  
dusted noodles.  
I touch hot spoons, forks,  
knives, cleanly washed  
by the taciturn dishwasher.

I hear heavy chopping  
of the cleaver,  
a cigarette-smoking cook wields.  
I see my mother plating golden  
hued pancakes.  
I catch a glimpse of my father weighing fresh  
slabs of meat  
in the small space behind the kitchen.

I smile at our cooks, sizzling  
veal cutlets at the grill.  
I greet them in my native  
dialect, *Hoisan-wa*.  
I say “*Daw Sin*,” good morning.  
Ready to work alongside them,  
I tighten my cloth apron  
on my back.  
I bite into crumbling baking  
soda biscuits to start my day.  
Sated, I lick my fingers  
and turn around.

My family’s soul.

**FLO OY WONG**

a poem read by Flo on October 28, 2023,  
A Birthday Celebration at Imperial Soup,  
723 Webster Street, Oakland, CA





